

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Holy Qur'an: An Intertextuell Dialogue

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Abstract

This article explores the intertextual dialogue between Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and the Holy Qur'an, focusing on the influence of Islamic texts on Goethe's poetic work, particularly his West-Eastern Divan. Goethe, one of the most revered figures in German literature, drew inspiration from the Qur'an through his engagement with the works of Persian Sufi poet Hafiz. This study narrates how Qur'anic themes, verses, and narratives were interwoven into Goethe's poetry, reflecting his deep respect and fascination for Islamic culture and spirituality. Key topics include Goethe's early exposure to the Qur'an, his attempts to learn Arabic, and the integration of Islamic concepts into his broader literary project. The article emphasizes the significance of Goethe's engagement with the Qur'an as a bridge between Eastern and Western literary traditions, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of Islam in the context of European literature.

Keywords: *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, West-Eastern, Divan, Holy Qur'an, Intertextuality, Hafiz, German Literature, Arabic Language and Sufism*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and West-Eastern Divan Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), one of the most influential figures in German literature who is often named also the Shakespeare of German literature, received the German translation of the poems of the Persian Sufi poet Mohammed Shemseddin Hafiz (1315–1390) in 1814. Goethe was deeply drawn to the poetry of this Eastern poet, identifying strongly with Hafiz and enthusiastically referring to him as his “twin brother.” What attracted Goethe to Hafiz was particularly his aesthetic program—extraordinary mystical poems about the enigma of human existence, spiritual devotion, and love for God. With an unparalleled curiosity about the cultures and literatures of Persia, Goethe adopted these themes and images, processed them, and integrated them into his own poetic program in the West-östlicher Divan (1819) (West-Eastern Divan). “Divan” is a Persian word that denotes a collection of poems. Goethe wrote this work

when he was about seventy years old. The West-eastern Divan consists of twelve chapters, each referred to as a book or “Nameh.” All chapters bear Persian titles along with corresponding German translations.

The West-eastern Divan is commonly interpreted as Goethe’s lyrical dialogue with the Persian poet Hafiz and the Islamic world. The title alone reveals much about the book’s intention. The West-eastern Divan is thematically influenced by many sources. Goethe’s most important source of inspiration was Shamsu Dīn Muhammad Hafiz Al Shirazi (ca. 1326 - 1390). However, some texts refer even further back to the Holy Qur’an and some Hadiths (sayings and traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)). This article examines the intertextual references found in Goethe’s Divan which refer back to verses in Holy Qur’an.

Goethe and Holy Qur’an

A considerable number of poems in Goethe’s West-eastern Divan were thematically influenced by the verses of the Quran, as will be explained below. However, this influence is not direct but comes through Hafiz.

Goethe’s engagement with the Holy Quran can be traced back to his early years, as evidenced by his letter to Johann Gottfried Herder from 1772, when he was just 23 years old. In a letter dated June 10, 1772, Goethe confessed to Herder his passionate search for ways to achieve what he called “mastery” and genuine “virtuosity.” The ancient Greek poet Pindar was to become his guide in this endeavor, and the letter mainly revolves around this. However, at the end of this appreciation of Pindar, he writes: “I would like to pray like Moses in the Quran: ‘Lord, make room for me in my constricted breast!’” Here, Goethe quotes verse 25 from chapter 20 of the Quran. The meaning of this becomes clearer when one reads the con-

tinuation of this surah. It says:

رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِنْ لِسَانِي يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي

“My Lord, expand for me my breast [with assurance] And ease for me my task And untie the knot from my tongue That they may understand my speech..”

This proves that the Quranic verse in the letter to Herder also expresses the idea of longing for “mastery,” for the easing of his “task,” for the untying of the knots in his tongue, i.e., for the final unfolding of his creative powers in the right way. Goethe’s simultaneous reference to the Quran and Pindar in this context sheds an unmediated light on the poet’s assessment of the former at that time.

Goethe read aloud from the German translation of the Quran by J. v. Hammer (possibly also from the prosaic English translation by George Sale) in Weimar before members of the ducal family and their guests. Schiller and his wife reported on the reading as eyewitnesses (Schiller's letter to Knebel, February 22, 1815).

Goethe describes in *Notes and Treatises for a Better Understanding of the West-Eastern Divan*³ how the style of Quranic narrative attracted and astonished him:

“And thus, the Quran repeats itself surah by surah. Belief and unbelief are divided into upper and lower; heaven and hell are intended for the confessors and deniers. Detailed determination of what is commanded and forbidden, fabulous stories of Jewish and Christian religions, amplifications of all kinds, boundless tautologies and repetitions form the body of this holy book, which, no matter how often we approach it, always repels us anew, then attracts us, astonishes us, and finally compels our reverence. this book will remain highly effective for all eternity, as it is thoroughly practical and composed according to the needs of a nation that bases its glory on ancient traditions and adheres to customary practices.”

In the Goethe and Schiller Archive in Weimar, there are handwritten manuscripts of Goethe's first intense engagement with the Quran, the Quran studies of 1771/1772, and later ones, so Goethe's interest in the Quran and Islam was established early on when a German translation of the Quran from the original text into German was printed in his birthplace. This translation was made by the Frankfurt professor David Friederich Megerlin.

Even before this book appeared at the Frankfurt Autumn Book Fair, Goethe came into possession of its draft, possibly because the publisher sent them to him for review. Goethe was a contributor to the *Frankfurter Gelehrte Anzeigen*, a journal exclusively devoted to reviews. Apparently, he was deeply disappointed by Megerlin's work, as this work appeared in no way timely or was very partial and biased. To Megerlin, the Holy Book of Islam seemed like a “book of lies,” and Muhammad as a false prophet and Antichrist.

The Tübingen theologian and literary scholar Karl-Josef Kuschel recounts in the discussion about his new book *Goethe and the Quran* how much Goethe's engagement with Islam stood in contradiction to the religious-political zeitgeist of the West:

“This readiness of Goethe to engage with a complex image of Islam is

of the greatest importance for today's time. We all live with an image of Islam that is too much reduced to violence, terror, misogyny, etc. Yet even Goethe was confronted with an Islamophobia fed by the Middle Ages and the Reformation. Both through the anti-Islamic polemic of the Christian churches and through the Turkish wars, which were understood as crusades against the Muslims. Already at the age of 22, Goethe came across an Islamophobic translation of the Quran—published in 1771—and made copies of it. However, he was not influenced by the negative propaganda.”

Goethe's attitude towards Islam is deeply positive, unlike any other in Germany before. He went so far as to say that if complete submission to universal power is the core principle of Islam, then we are all Muslims, as he says in a poem in Hikmet Nameh: Book of Proverbs of the Divan:

*Närrisch, daß jeder in seinem Falle
Seine besondere Meinung preist!
Wenn Islam "Gott ergeben" heißt,
In Islam leben und sterben wir alle6.*

Translation

*("Stupid that everyone in his case
Is praising his particular opinion!
If Islam means submission to God,
We all live and die in Islam.")*

Goethe and the Arabic Language

Goethe endeavored to learn to speak and write Arabic. There are several of Goethe's papers that contain handwritten excerpts from Megerlin's translation and from Maracci's Latin Quran. In these, he wrote down a considerable number of verses from ten different surahs (chapters of the Quran). Goethe always felt the inadequacies of all translations (Latin, English, German, and French) and was constantly searching for new translations. Goethe learned Arabic from the professors of Oriental Studies— Paulus, Lorsbach, and Kosegarten in Jena—and was ambitious in his desire to understand the Quran. Anke Bosse, a German literary scholar who wrote her dissertation on the West-eastern Divan, writes about Goethe's engagement with the Arabic language as follows:

“Beginning in 1815, Goethe began imitating and copying the mysterious letters of the Arabic script from Orientalist books, though he never actually learned the Arabic language. Indeed, we have records of Goethe's attempts from the fall of 1815, under the guidance of the Heidelberg Orientalist Heinrich Eberhard Paulus, not only to draw the script but also to

learn the meaning of a few Arabic words.”

Goethe seems to have intensely engaged with the last chapter of the Holy Quran, which bears the title Al-Nas. In the aforementioned manuscript

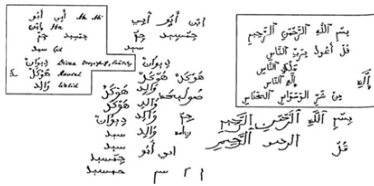


Abb. 5: Arabische Schreibübungen Goethes nach Vorlagen Heinrich Eberhard Paulus' (Bl. 126), Herbst 1815

published by the Orientalist Paulus, Goethe wrote the entire surah from beginning to end. This was the content of one of Goethe's most successful ornately decorated Arabic calligraphies, which he wrote in the fall of 1815.

Goethe was already familiar with the 114th surah in the winter of 1813/14, before he began writing the *Divan*. At that time, the Wars of Liberation against Napoleon brought not only military and political turbulence to Weimar but also unexpected cultural encounters. Among other things, Goethe received an “Arabic codex” that “our warriors brought back from Spain.”¹⁰ This codex contained—as Goethe learned from the Jena Orientalist Lorsbach—the 114th surah of the Quran.

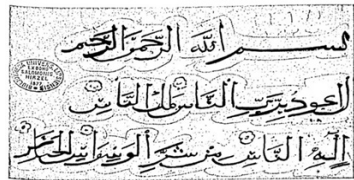


Abb. 6: Goethes Kalligraphie der 114. Koran-Sure mit Abt-Umschlagung (Bl. 177), Herbst 1815

Goethe studied Arabic handbooks, grammars, travel books, poems, anthologies, books about the biography of the Prophet Muhammad, various Quran translations of his time, and engaged in extensive exchanges with Oriental scholars. He even copied short Arabic prayers himself. Regarding the extraordinary aesthetics and semantic uniqueness of the Arabic language, Goethe said no other language possesses such great depth:

“Not much is missing for me to learn Arabic; at least I want to practice the writing so much that I can reproduce the amulets, talismans, Abraxas, and seals in the original script. In no other language are spirit, word, and script perhaps so primitively embodied.”

It is said that Goethe acquired Arabic handbooks by Rumi, Saadi, and Attar, as well as grammars, anthologies, and travelogues in the Arabic language, which he imitated while practicing writing in Arabic. In the Goethe and Schiller Archive, Weimar, there are some pages of Johann

Wolfgang von Goethe's Arabic writing exercises that date back to 1816, the time when Goethe was intensely working on his *Divan*. Some of these pages are listed below.

not an easy matter. It is noteworthy that the title page of the first complete edition of Goethe's *West-Eastern Divan* from 1819 bears an Arabic title in Arabic script.

The Arabic text reads *الديوان الشرقي للمؤلف الغربي*, which literally translates to: The Eastern Divan by the Western Author.



Direct Adaptations from the Quran

It can be assumed that the Holy Quran had a direct influence on the content of the Divan. There are some poems that are direct adaptations of Quranic verses, and other poems are inspired by the Holy Verses. Events, stories, and characters mentioned in the Holy Quran also become subjects of the poems in the Divan.

The poem *Talismane* from the first book of the Divan, *Buch des Sängers*, begins with the following well-known lines:

*Gottes ist der Orient!
Gottes ist der Okzident!
Nord und südliches Gelände
Ruh in Frieden seiner Hände!*

Translation

*(God's is the Orient!
God's is the Occident!
Northern and southern lands
repose in the peace of His hands.)*

These lines are a direct condensation of Quranic verse No. 115 from the second chapter, which states "To Allah belong the East and the West. Whichever direction you turn, there is the Face of Allah. Indeed, Allah is all-Encompassing, all-Knowing."

وَاللَّهُ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ ۚ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

Goethe slightly altered the words of the Quran by using "East and West" instead of "North and South."

Goethe's universal concept of humanity is reflected in these lines. Some critics believe that Goethe advocates the universality of Islamic ideas and refer to these verses. In the *Hikmet Nameh: Buch der Sprüche*, he notes

that we all live and die in the religion of Islam, as he says:

*Närrisch, daß jeder in seinem Falle
Seine besondere Meinung preist!
Wenn Islam "Gott ergeben" heißt,
In Islam leben und sterben wir alle.*

Translation

*("Stupid that everyone in his case
Is praising his particular opinion!
If Islam means submission to God,
We all live and die in Islam.")*

Furthermore, the lyrical "I" in the third stanza of the same poem, Talismane, pleads to God:

*Mich verwirren will das Irren,
Doch du weißt mich zu entwirren.
Wenn ich handle, wenn ich dichte,
Gib du meinem Weg die Richte!*

Translation

*(Error seeks to confound me,
But You know how to untangle me.
When I act, when I write,
Give You my path the direction!)*

These lines, in which the poet beseeches God for salvation, are similar in content and tone to Surat Al-Fatiha, especially verses (5-7): "You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help. Guide us on the Straight Path, the path of those who have received Your grace; not the path of those who have brought down wrath upon themselves, nor of those who have gone astray!"

إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ (5) أَهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيمَ (6) صِرَاطَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ الْمَغْضُوبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّالِّينَ

For example, the second stanza of the poem Freisinn from the Buch des Sängers in the Divan reads as follows:

*Er hat euch die Gestirne gesetzt
Als Leiter zu Land und See,
Damit ihr euch daran ergetzt,
Stets blickend in die Höh'.*

Translation:

*He has set the stars for you
As guides on land and sea,
So that you may take pleasure in them,
Always gazing upwards.*

This is nothing other than the versified form of verse 97 of chapter No. 6 of the Holy Quran,²² which reads: “And it is He who placed for you the stars that you may be guided by them through the darkneses of the land and sea. We have detailed the signs for a people who know.”

(وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمْ النُّجُومَ لِتَهْتَدُوا بِهَا فِي ظُلُمَاتِ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّجْمِ ۗ قَدْ فَصَّلْنَا الْآيَاتِ لِقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ

The themes of some poems in the Divan are directly taken from the Holy Quran. The story of the Seven Sleepers is a famous tale in the Quran, described in chapter No. 18, Al-Kahf. The Holy Quran introduces the narrative of the story as follows: “Have you ‘O Prophet‘ thought that the people of the cave and the plaque I were ‘the only‘ wonders of Our signs?, (Remember) when the young men fled for refuge (from their disbelieving folk) to the Cave, they said: “Our Lord! Bestow on us mercy from Yourself, and facilitate for us our affair in the right way!”

أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ أَصْحَابَ الْكَهْفِ وَالرَّقِيمِ كَانُوا مِنْ آيَاتِنَا عَجَبًا (9) إِذْ أَوَى الْفِتْيَةُ إِلَى الْكَهْفِ فَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا آتِنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً وَهَيِّئْ لَنَا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا رَشَدًا

The penultimate poem Siebenschläfer of the last book of the Divan, Chuld Nameh - Buch des Paradieses, extensively addresses this story. While the Holy Quran briefly summarizes the story of these young men, the Divan recounts it in an extensive and detailed manner in a well-structured way. The Divan begins as follows:

*Sechs Begünstigte des Hofes
Fliehen vor des Kaisers Grimme,
Der als Gott sich läßt verehren,
Doch als Gott sich nicht bewähret:
Denn ihn hindert eine Fliege,
Guter Bissen sich zu freuen.*

Translation:

*Six favorites of the court
Flee from the emperor's wrath,*

*Who allows himself to be revered as a god,
But does not prove himself as a god:
For a fly hinders him
From enjoying a good bite.*

The dog that accompanies the young men is portrayed in almost the same way in both the Quran and the Divan. In the Holy Quran, it is stated: “And you would have thought they were awake,¹ though they were asleep. We turned them over, to the right and left, while their dog stretched his forelegs at the entrance. Had you looked at them, you would have certainly fled away from them, filled with horror”.

وَتَحْسَبُهُمْ أَيْقَاطًا وَهُمْ رُقُودٌ ۚ وَنُقَلِّبُهُمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ ۚ وَكَلْبُهُمْ بَاسِطٌ ذِرَاعَيْهِ بِالْوَصِيدِ ۚ لَوِ
أَطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَوَلَّيْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِرَارًا وَلَمَلِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ رُغْبًا

The Divan, on the other hand, recounts it as follows:

*Schäferhund, er will nicht weichen;
Weggescheucht, den Fuß zerschmettert,
Drängt er sich an seinen Herrn
Und gesellt sich zum Verborgnen,
Zu den Lieblingen des Schlafes.*

Translation:

*The shepherd dog, he will not yield;
Chased away, his foot shattered,
He presses close to his master And joins the hidden ones,
The darlings of sleep.*

Some lines are almost identical in both books, as in the Quran: “And We turned them to the right and to the left.” وَنُقَلِّبُهُمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ. These lines are rendered in the Divan as follows:

*So zur Rechten, so zur Linken
Hab ich immer sie gewendet.*

In the Buch des Unmuts (Rendsch Nameh), Goethe notes that the old dervishes²⁸, including the Prophet Muhammad, found the respect and peace they deserved because they knew the essence of religion. The new dervishes merely imitate them. Therefore, they might feel resentment toward their old models. The solution for this resentment is nothing other than killing oneself. Goethe then quotes from the Quran, which states that Allah, the Almighty, grants the Prophet protection in this world and the hereafter. Whoever does not believe this can soothe his anger by hanging

himself from a rope.

*Ärgerts jemand, daß es Gott gefallen,
Mahomet zu gönnen Schutz und Glück,
An den stärksten Balken seiner Hallen,
Da befestig' er den derben Strick,
Knüpfe sich daran! Das hält und trägt.
Er wird fühlen, daß sein Zorn sich legt.*

Translation:

*If it angers someone that God favored
To grant Muhammad protection and happiness,
Let him fasten a sturdy rope
To the strongest beam in his halls, Tie himself to it!
It holds and bears. He will feel his anger subside.*

The above poem is a direct versification of verse No. 15 of chapter No. 22 (Al-Hajj), which reads: “Whoever thinks that Allah will not help His Prophet in this world and the Hereafter, let them stretch out a rope to the ceiling and strangle themselves, then let them see if this plan will do away with ‘the cause of’ their rage.”

مَنْ كَانَ يَظُنُّ أَنْ لَنْ يَنْصُرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ فَلْيَمْدُدْ بِسَبَبٍ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ ثُمَّ لِيَقْطَعْ فَلْيَنْظُرْ هَلْ
يُذْهِبْنَ كَيْدَهُ مَا يَغِيظُ

Poetry and poets form the central theme of Quranic chapter No. 26, titled “The Poets.” In the concluding verses of the chapter, Allah describes the poets: “As for poets, only the wayward follow them, Do you not see that they wander about in every valley, and say things which they do not act upon”.

وَالشُّعْرَاءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوُونَ (224) أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّهُمْ فِي كُلِّ وَادٍ يَهِيمُونَ (225) وَأَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ مَا لَا
يَفْعَلُونَ 226)

Goethe discusses the same theme in the poem Anklage in Hafiz Nameh:
Buch Hafiz:

*Weiß denn der, mit wem er geht und wandelt.
Er, der immer nur im Wahnsinn handelt?
Grenzenlos, von eigensinn'gem Lieben,
Wird er in die Öde fortgetrieben,
Seiner Klagen Reim', in Sand geschrieben,
Sind vom Winde gleich verjagt;
Er versteht nicht, was er sagt,*

Was er sagt, wird er nicht halten.

Translation:

*Does he know with whom he goes and walks,
He who always acts only in madness?
Boundless, driven by self-willed love,
He is driven away into the wasteland,
His complaints' rhyme, written in sand,
Are immediately chased away by the wind;
He does not understand what he says,
What he says, he will not keep.*

Goethe's selection of verses is very significant. For the first time, we can recognize some aspects of Islamic religious teachings that Goethe considered relevant to himself. These verses of the Quran teach humans how to see nature in all its manifestations as signs of divine laws. Goethe said we should recognize "God's greatness in the small things."

Goethe writes:

*Ich sah mit Staunen und Vergnügen
Eine Pfauenfeder im Koran liegen,
»Willkommen an dem heiligen Platz,
Der Erdgebilde höchster Schatz!
An dir, wie an des Himmels Sternen
Ist Gottes Größe im kleinen zu lernen
Daß er, der Welten überblickt,
Sein Auge hier hat aufgedrückt“*

Translation:

*I saw with wonder and delight
A peacock feather lying in the Quran,
"Welcome to the sacred place,
The highest treasure of earthly creation!
On you, as on the stars of heaven,
God's greatness can be learned in the small,
That He, who oversees worlds,
Has impressed His eye here."*

This verse refers to the Ayah of Surah Al-Baqarah,

Verse 26, and Surah Al-Hajj, Verse 73, where the metaphor of the fly is given. This verse speaks of the omnipotence of Allah and the helplessness of other gods created by humans. The verse reads as follows: "O people, an example is presented, so listen to it. Indeed, those you invoke besides

Allah will never create [as much as] a fly, even if they gathered together for that purpose. And if the fly should steal away from them a [tiny] thing, they could not recover it from him. Weak are the pursuer and pursued.”

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ ضُرِبَ مَثَلٌ فَاستَمِعُوا لَهُ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَنْ يَخْلُقُوا ذُبَابًا وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعُوا لَهُ وَإِنْ يَسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْئًا لَا يَسْتَنْفِذُوهُ مِنْهُ ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوبُ

One of the most remarkable features of the Quranic verses is that while they seem to refer to specific persons or events, they also indirectly relate to many others. Both their direct and indirect recipients draw lessons from the verses. For example, the above verses refer to the poets of the pre-Islamic era of ignorance. During this time, the poets were those who claimed to receive information from the unseen, who enchanted the people around them with their rhymed words, and who, like today’s fortune tellers, had contact with the jinn (magical spirits). When the Quran was revealed, those who rejected it were still considered poets. The statement in the above verse that those who followed the poets were the misguided ones gives us enough clues to understand their characteristics.

Indirect Influence of the Quran

The persons and occurrences mentioned in the Holy Quran can also be considered as thematic foundations for the poems in the Divan. In the first poem of the Divan Hegire, Chidr (or Khidr³⁵) appears (line 6 from the bottom), a figure in Islamic history, as Goethe’s companion to the East, and Goethe calls upon his readers to make a “Hegira” to “Chiser’s spring” in the “pure East”:

*Nord und West und Süd zersplittern,
Throne bersten, Reiche zittern:
Flüchte du, im reinen Osten
Patriarchenluft zu kosten,
Unter Lieben, Trinken, Singen
Soll dich Chisers Quell verjüngen.*

English Translation:

*North and West and South shatter,
Thrones burst, empires tremble:
Flee you, in the pure East
To taste the patriarchal air,
Among love, drinking, singing,
Chiser’s spring shall rejuvenate you.*

Chidr (or Chiser - Arabic الخضر) appears in a mysterious episode of the Quran (Chapter 18, Surah Al-Kahf, Verses 59-81) as a righteous servant of God described as possessing great wisdom or mystical knowledge. In

various Islamic and non-Islamic traditions, Chiser is described as an angel, prophet, or wali who guards the sea, teaches secret knowledge, and helps those in need.

Goethe adopted a motif from Persian literature in his Divan, where Chiser is the spiritual guide of poets³⁷, a motif conveyed to him by Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall in the preface to his translation of Hafiz's Divan. Here, he retells an old legend from Shiraz, according to which one morning an old man in green appeared to Hafiz and gave him a drink from a cup: "It was Chiser, the guardian of the spring of life, who allowed Hafiz to drink from it and promised him immortal fame. Thus, he attained the consecration of the poet."

Goethe, who conceived his Divan as a Western response to Hafiz's Divan and portrayed himself as its "twin," created a symbolic parallel between himself and the Oriental poet by referring to Chiser's spring.³⁹ It is noteworthy that Chiser appears to the Prophet Moses in the Quranic story and also accompanies him as a spiritual guide on his journey. Similarly, Goethe introduces him as his guide for his journey to the Orient.

In the concluding poem of the book *Suleika*, we find an explicit reference to the Quranic theme of the ninety-nine names and attributes of God:

In tausend Formen

*In tausend Formen magst du dich verstecken,
Doch, Allerliebste, gleich erkenn ich dich;
Du magst mit Zauberschleiern dich bedecken,
Allgegenwärtge, gleich erkenn ich dich.
An der Zypresse reinstem jungem Streben,
Allschöngewachsne, gleich erkenn ich dich.
In des Kanales reinem Wellenleben,
Allschmeichelhafte, wohl erkenn ich dich.
Wenn steigend sich der Wasserstrahl entfaltet,
Allspielende, wie froh erkenn ich dich!
Wenn Wolke sich gestaltend umgestaltet,
Allmannigfaltge, dort erkenn ich dich.
An des geblühten Schleiers Wiesentepich,
Allbuntbesternte, schön erkenn ich dich;
Und greift umher ein tausendarmger Eppich,
O Allumklammernde, da kenn ich dich.
Wenn am Gebirg der Morgen sich entzündet,
Gleich, Allerheiternde, begrüß ich dich,
Dann über mir der Himmel rein sich ründet,
Allherzerweiternde, dann atm ich dich.*

*Was ich mit äußerem Sinn, mit innerm kenne,
 Du Allbelehrende, kenn ich durch dich;
 Und wenn ich Allahs Namenhundert nenne,
 Mit jedem klingt ein Name nach für dich.*

Translation:

In a thousand forms

*In a thousand forms you may hide yourself,
 But, beloved, I recognize you at once;
 You may cover yourself with magic veils,
 Omnipresent, I recognize you at once.
 In the purest young growth of the cypress,
 All-beautiful, I recognize you at once.
 In the pure wave-life of the canal, All-caressing,
 I recognize you well. When the water jet unfolds as it rises,
 All-playing, how gladly I recognize you!
 When the cloud transforms and reshapes,
 All-diverse, there I recognize you.
 On the meadow carpet of the flowery veil,
 All-starred, I recognize you beautifully;
 And when a thousand-armed ivy reaches around,
 O All-encompassing, I know you there.
 When the morning ignites on the mountain,
 At once, All-brightening, I greet you,
 Then above me the sky rounds itself clear,
 All-heart-expanding, then I breathe you.
 What I know with outer sense, with inner;
 You All-teaching one, I know through you;
 And when I name Allah's hundred names,
 With each one, a name resounds for you.*

These are clear references to the names of Allah mentioned in the Holy Quran. In some verses, this theme is explicitly addressed. The Quran states:

“Allah has the Most Beautiful Names. So call upon Him by them, and keep away from those who abuse His Names.1 They will be punished for what they used to do”

وَلِلَّهِ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ فَادْعُوهُ بِهَا ۚ وَذُرُوا الَّذِينَ يُلْحِقُونَ فِي الْأَسْمَاءِ سُبْحَانَ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

Regarding the numbers of Allah's names, the Prophet Muhammad said, “Indeed, Allah has ninety-nine names, one less than one hundred. Whoever enumerates them will enter Paradise.”

Another poem titled *Siebenschläfer* from the *Book of Paradise* tells the Quranic story of the seven young nobles who refused to recognize an emperor and pray to him, and who fled to a cave to escape persecution. They were protected by God, who caused them to sleep for three hundred years and granted them rebirth. In the *Book of Suleika*, the story of the Quranic figure of Zuleika from the story of the Prophet Joseph is recounted in detail. In this way, it is not difficult to find many allusions and references to the themes and figures mentioned in the Holy Quran in Goethe's *Divan*.

In conclusion, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *West-Eastern Divan* stands as a testament to the profound impact of Islamic culture, particularly the Holy Qur'an, on Western literature. Through his deep engagement with Quranic themes, Persian poetry, and Sufi mysticism, Goethe crafted a work that not only bridges the gap between East and West but also exemplifies the universal nature of spiritual and poetic expression. His incorporation of Quranic intertextuality serves as a reminder of the rich cultural exchanges that have shaped world literature, highlighting the enduring relevance of the Holy Qur'an in the broader context of global intellectual and artistic

traditions. Goethe's *Divan* remains a powerful example of how intercultural dialogue can enrich literary creativity, fostering a deeper understanding between diverse cultures and belief systems.

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